

# DAVE WNUCK NUMISMATICS LLC

[HOME PAGE](#) [COINS FOR SALE](#) [NEWSLETTER](#) [COIN APPRAISALS](#) [MORE...](#)



## Making the Grade #36: Authenticating Coins vs. Modern Art; Plus - The One That Got Away

6/19/2017

[1 Comment](#)

### **Psst! Hey Buddy... You Wanna Buy a \$10 Million Painting Just Found in Arizona?**

All I can say is – I thank goodness that we live in the fact-based world of coin authentication, and not the less scientific and somewhat “squishy” world of modern art authentication.

That was my reaction when I heard about a newly discovered, unsigned painting by the painter Jackson Pollock. At left you can see her in all her glory.

Unlike coins, where we use primarily scientific methods to authenticate coins, here is what the modern art world is forced to sometimes use for authentication (per the website of J. Levine, the auction company

## Archives

[May 2019](#)  
[February 2019](#)  
[December 2018](#)  
[June 2018](#)  
[March 2018](#)  
[October 2017](#)  
[June 2017](#)  
[May 2017](#)  
[March 2017](#)  
[December 2016](#)  
[October 2016](#)  
[September 2016](#)  
[August 2016](#)  
[June 2016](#)  
[May 2016](#)  
[February 2016](#)  
[January 2016](#)  
[November 2015](#)  
[October 2015](#)  
[August 2015](#)  
[June 2015](#)  
[May 2015](#)  
[April 2015](#)

selling this painting this very week):

*"Peter Paul Biro (Forensic Studies in Art):*

*'... the dating of the painting to the mid twentieth century is well established as no pigments or binding media introduced in the late 1950s and 1960s have been detected. Furthermore, the artist's working materials and painting technique are illuminated.' Full forensics report available upon request. "*

So – no signature, no direct paper trail from the artist to the current owner, no mention of this painting in any prior catalog of this famous artist's work, etc. Just that the materials used were consistent with those used in the mid-1900's, it looks like something Mr. Pollock painted, and the owner has some sort of connection to the painter.

Now, I'm certainly not saying this isn't a genuine Jackson Pollock. If the auction

company says it is, then it is. I have absolutely no scientific basis and no expertise to say otherwise (plus, I don't want to get sued by anybody). The auction house used every tool at their disposal to determine if it is authentic, and I applaud them for that.

I know that we in the coin hobby aren't 100% perfect in detecting counterfeits. But I also know that I sleep well, knowing the current excellent state of our coin authentication techniques.

### **I Found The One That Got Away**

When I was a boy of around 12, I came across an old auction catalog of large cents. Specifically, it was the Louis Helfenstein Collection of Large Cents, sold by Lester Merkin in 1964. The cover photo stopped me in my tracks. See below for that image.

His large cent collection was out of this world in terms of quality. I purchased the catalog and that was that.

Then, sometime later, I was lucky enough to win a scholarship to attend the ANA Summer Seminar in Colorado Springs. And there, in the darkened bowels of the ANA museum there was a large, back-lighted image of this famous (in the numismatic world, anyway) photo above a display of large cents. I don't remember the coins in the display, but when I saw that image "floating" in a darkened room it was nearly a religious experience for me.

Fast forward to the mid-1990's.

The eminent numismatic book dealer Mr. Charles Davis had a stack of maybe 25 or 50 of these images at a coin show in Boston. They were poster size, in full color -- just beautifully done. Exactly what I was looking for. Wow! My dream had finally come true.

So I obviously went right over there and purchased one. Right?

[March 2015](#)

[February 2015](#)

[January 2015](#)

[December 2014](#)

[November 2014](#)

[October 2014](#)

[September 2014](#)

[August 2014](#)

[July 2014](#)

[June 2014](#)

[May 2014](#)

[April 2014](#)

[March 2014](#)

[February 2014](#)

### **Author**

#### **Dave Wnuck**

Professional Numismatists Guild (PNG) member since 2006. Member of all major numismatic organizations.

Dave is a contributor to the Redbook, as well as a member of the PCGS Board of Experts.

 [RSS Feed](#)

### **Categories**

[All](#)

Wrong-o.

He had a whole pile of them, and I was very busy at that show. Besides, I didn't want to put that fragile photograph behind my table and then carry it home for fear that I might damage that precious cargo. So I told myself I'll buy a copy at the next show when I'm better prepared to handle this fragile, awkward item.

So right at the start of the next show on the circuit I ran up to Charlie's table and told him to put one aside for me.

He said: Sorry. They are sold out.

Wha...?

All gone? So quickly? He had a big pile of them about 3 weeks before!

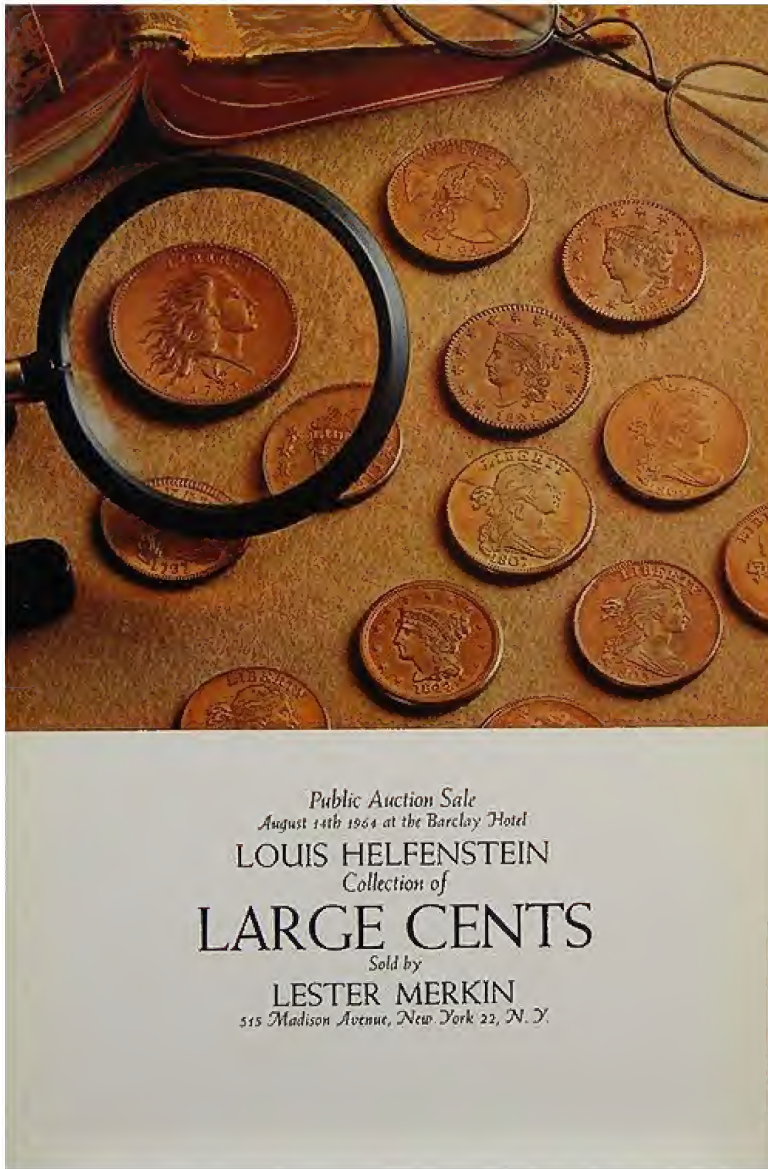
Long story short -- I have spent the next 21 years looking for one of those damn posters.

And wouldn't you know it? At this Spring's Early American Coppers show in Philly, Charlie Davis once again had a (very small) stack of them. This time I bought one right away.

Now I can die a happy man.

As an epilogue to this story, later in that show a good friend and customer said - "I've got a present for you." And sure enough -- he had bought another one for me at the same show, not knowing I already bought one. I thanked him profusely, of course. (I had told everyone who would listen during those 21 years my tale of woe and of "the one that got away". Remarkably enough -- he remembered. My stories must be more memorable than I thought).

So I went from no posters, to 2 posters. I've since given one away to a family who is collecting high end early copper in a big way. Hopefully they will enjoy the image as much as I know I will.



Public Auction Sale  
August 14th 1964 at the Barclay Hotel  
LOUIS HELFENSTEIN  
Collection of  
**LARGE CENTS**  
Sold by  
LESTER MERKIN  
515 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.

#### The "Making the Grade" Featured Coin

##### **1857 Flying Eagle Cent. PCGS graded MS64 CAC.**

Attractively toned, lustrous, and quite choice. \$1950.

#### New Listings

##### **1825 Matron Head Large Cent. PCGS graded MS63 BN.**

A full lustrous cartwheel sheen covers both sides in full. Light brown in color and quite pleasing in hand. \$4500.

##### **1865 Indian Cent. PCGS graded Proof-64 Red Cameo.**

A stunning example of a rarely seen Cameo-ed Indian Cent. \$5500.

##### **1865 Seated Dime. PCGS graded MS67.**

A spectacular example of this popular civil war date, and likely among the finest few in existence. \$11,500.

##### **1847 Seated Quarter. PCGS graded MS65 CAC.**



This is the Gene Gardner specimen, last sold in 2014. It is among the finest known of this conditionally rare gem seated quarter date. It is accompanied by a PCGS TrueView image. \$15,000.

**1854-O Seated Quarter, With Arrows. PCGS graded VF-35.**

Huge O variety. Very popular due to the ridiculous, crude O mintmark that was seemingly carved into the die with a steak knife. This coin is unknown above Choice AU. \$3550.

**1891 Seated Quarter. PCGS graded MS66.**

Booming luster over light golden toning. A great example of the final year of this long lived series. \$2400.

**1835 Bust Half Dollar. PCGS graded AU53 CAC.**

O-103.light golden russet in color. Ex. Dick Graham collection. \$485.

**1882 Morgan Dollar. MS66.**

It is hard to find even one flaw on this coin. Knockout blue-green-red toning on the obverse \$1475

**1882-S Morgan Dollar. PCGS graded MS68 CAC.**

Gorgeously toned, and nearly perfect, as one would expect from an MS68 CAC'd coin. \$8950.

**1888-O Morgan Dollar. PCGS graded MS66.**

Zippidy do dah! Color everywhere. A better date, priced at only a modest premium over an untuned example. \$2550.

**1890 Morgan Dollar. PCGS graded MS65+, CAC.**

Light golden toning with a hint of blue rim toning. \$1975.

**World Coins, Exonumia, Flotsam & Jetsam**

**(1652) dated Pine Tree Threepence, Wyatt Copy. PCGS graded AU50.**

W-14060, per the Bowers' Colonial encyclopedia. Struck in silver, with crusty gray toning and just a hint of luster. Thomas Wyatt made these copies in New York City, most likely during the 1840-1856 period. They were first mentioned in a periodical of the day in June of 1856. A PCGS TrueView image of this coin is included. \$975.

**(1652) dated Pine Tree Sixpence, Wyatt Copy. PCGS graded XF45.**

W-14072, per the Bowers' Colonial encyclopedia. Struck in silver and made circa 1856 or so. Crusty gray toning, and not conserved in any way. A PCGS TrueView image of this coin is included. This coin and the previous Wyatt copy on this list have been off the market since at least the 1960's. \$975.

**1792 Washington President Pattern. Electrotype Copy. Almost Uncirculated [uncertified].**

A great, medium chocolate brown electrotype copy example of this rare pattern issue. I have never handled an original, so I have had to satisfy myself with this electrotype copy until that time comes. \$295.

**1793 Wreath Cent Electrotype Copy. Uncirculated [uncertified].**

A well made example of an uncirculated wreath cent. The host coin could likely be identified with some detective work, as it would be valued into the six figures today. \$295.

**1803 Half Eagle Size Kettle Token. PCGS graded XF40.**

A beautiful chocolate brown, with absolutely no trace of the gold wash that was likely originally present. These were manufactured in Birmingham, England for use as gaming tokens. They are often collected by US numismatists due to their similarity to US \$5 gold pieces. This item is accompanied by PCGS TrueView images. \$495.

**1808-Mo Mexico Four Escudos Contemporary Counterfeit. Very Fine [uncertified].**

Likely brass, with a gold colored finish. It took guts to try to pass a "gold" 4 escudos counterfeit, as that was a hefty sum.

Double struck, with subtle and pretty toning. \$195.

#### **1810 So Chile 8 Reales. NGC graded AU53.**

Santiago Mint. A well detailed portrait of Ferdinand VII (no relation to Franz Ferdinand, the 1980's New Wave group, by the way). Lustrous and just one small step away from full uncirculated status. \$1850.

#### **1831 Bust Dime. Fine. Counterstamped [uncertified].**

As popular as the bust dime series is with collectors these days, what seems to be even more popular are those that sport counterstamps. This one says (or seems to say) EXTRA, but nearly all of the "A" is off the planchet. Attractive and crusty gray toning. \$350.

#### **1846-O Seated Dollar With Counterstamp. Very Fine [uncertified].**

Fantasy countermark, with a script FR VII for Frederik VII of Denmark on a US 1846 Seated Dollar. The FR VII countermarks on various coins of the world are believed to be fantasies produced in Paris at some time after 1860, as they appeared in coin auctions shortly afterward. There are no confirmed originals for these types. Still avidly collected when they show up. \$495.

#### **Ca.1630 KING RICHARD II SILVER MEDALET/COUNTER BY SIMON DE PASSE**

Silver medalet in imitation of engraving. This item has been in an extensive collection of tokens & medals formed in England over the past half century. The collector who formed it told me it was his single favorite item in the collection. \$395

#### **1913-A Prussia 3 Marks. PCGS graded MS62.**

I'll be honest – I bought this coin primarily for its crazy-go-nuts toning. More attractive even than the PCGS TrueView images would have you believe. \$250.

#### **1933 General Motors 25th Anniversary Medal.- NGC-61.**

A huge 76 mm (3 inch) diameter medal, struck in bronze and silver plated. Very popular due to the classic art deco design and the fame of the designer – Norman Bel Geddes. Bel Geddes was the designer of the Original 1939 "Futurama". No no, not the animated TV show, but the exhibition. If you own a car, or if you have ever ridden in a car, you need to own this medal. \$1175.

#### **1978 Canada One Cent, Elizabeth II, deep reverse die cap error, Red & Brown Uncirculated [uncertified].**

Holy moley is this thing cool! Sorry for my sudden display of enthusiasm, but it is true. This coin tells a story – a story of a wayward planchet that deformed greatly and then somehow got past the legendary Canadian mint quality assurance personnel. If this was on a US coin it would sell for multiples of this price. If the next owner wants me to have it slabbed by either PCGS or NGC, I will do so at my cost. But quite honestly – it is quite fun to examine it "in the raw". \$895.

[CLICK HERE TO SEE MY INVENTORY](#)







Like 0

Tweet

[1 Comment](#)

PROUDLY POWERED BY WEEBLY